Academic Writing and Critical Thinking

some ideas for the classroom

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Aims and objectives

- To consider the nature of EAP

- To look at a model process for academic writing

- To discuss the role of critical thinking in EAP

What is EAP?

"EAP is a branch of ESP."

What is EAP?

"EAP is the English that is taught to second-/third-language students preparing to enter undergraduate and postgraduate courses at universities and other institutions of higher education."

What is EAP?

Strong extrinsic motivation of academic study and a strong needs-driven syllabus,

What abilities will an EAP teacher have?

"An EAP teacher will have the knowledge and understanding of **the key differences between the content and processes** required for teaching and learning in an EAP class compared with a general ELT class."

(BALEAP Competence framework)

Part One - Academic Writing

What about academic writing?

"The most problematic use of English in Higher Education is probably writing."

Andy Gillett,
"*What is EAP?*"

What about process?

- identifying purpose, topic and task *1*
- self-evaluating and receiving feedback
- rewriting
- organizing
- proofreading and self-editing
- generating ideas
- writing
- planning

identifying purpose, topic and task

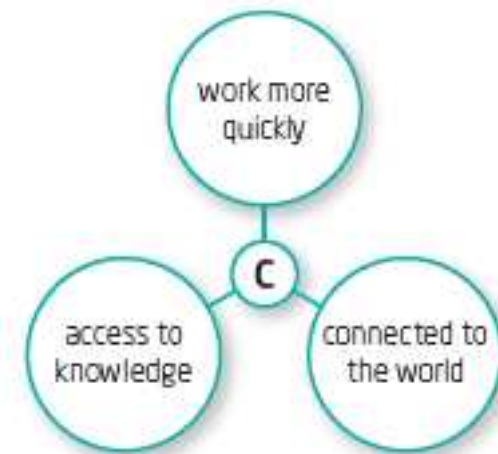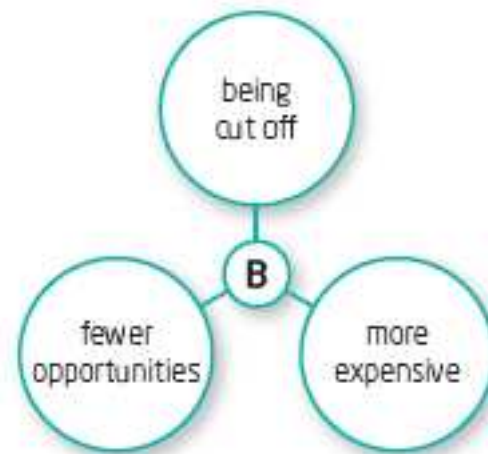|	Essay titles	Meaning of verbs
1	**Outline** the main disadvantages of a lack of education in today's competitive world.	communicate the main points of something in order, *with considerable / without any detail*
2	**Discuss** the financial problems faced by unemployed older people.	examine or explain an idea *in detail / without any detail*, giving explanations, examples, or reasons to support the points you make
3	**Explore** the benefits of being a mature student at university.	look at concepts, research, or information *to see what you can find / to prove an idea*
4	**Compare and contrast** the provision of pre-school education in two countries you are familiar with.	put ideas, concepts, or information side by side and look at *the similarities only / both the similarities and the differences*
5	**Explain** the different attitudes towards education among a range of age groups in your country.	give *full / only the main* information about something, e.g. an idea, principle, or situation, so that it is clear
6	**Classify** the different types of buildings on the university campus.	organize information or items into groups according to *common / different* features
7	**Examine** the need for learning foreign languages at secondary school level.	look at something closely, give *the arguments for and against / the advantages and disadvantages*, and state your conclusion
8	**Summarize** the main types of vocational training you are familiar with.	give *all the details / only the main points* of a concept, idea, or principle

generating ideas

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TITLE: *Describe the advantages of studying a foreign language.*

1 *Brainstorming* – Write 'studying a foreign language' in the centre of a piece of paper and write down as many ideas connected with this as you can think of. Do not exclude any ideas, positive or negative.

2 *Key words and phrases* – Make a list of nouns or brief phrases that you associate with studying a foreign language.

3 *Using text-based sources* – Use online articles or information from newspapers and magazines to help you generate ideas.

4 *Using visual information* – Research images, video clips, or data online or in the media associated with studying a foreign language, and note down key ideas or information.

planning

1 Summarize the benefits of being able to use a computer.
2 Outline the factors which make young people choose a particular career.
3 Describe the disadvantages of not having access to the internet.

A
- potential earnings
- influence of friends
- parental influence

B
- being cut off
- fewer opportunities
- more expensive

C
- work more quickly
- access to knowledge
- connected to the world

organizing

OUTLINE A

Introduction (including thesis statement)

Paragraph 1: Business career

Job satisfaction – contributing to the success of a company
achieving personal success

Impact on society – helping to create jobs
generating wealth in society as a whole

Paragraph 2: Teaching career

Job satisfaction – doing a valuable job
helping children / young people to succeed in their studies

Impact on society – preparing young people for life and work
helping young people to become productive members of society

Conclusion

writing

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1 Using noun + noun phrases is one way of paraphrasing ideas. Create noun + noun phases to paraphrase the underlined parts of the sentences below.

Example: *Technology derived from satellites is now very advanced.*
                  Satellite technology is now very advanced.

1 <u>Skills related to using computers</u> are essential in all areas of professional life.

2 The <u>network that we set up to link communications</u> across the company is constantly being updated.

3 The <u>culture of how to behave in a business context</u> can vary enormously between different parts of the world.

4 The <u>revolution that has taken place in the way information is delivered</u> has transformed <u>methods of study</u> at most universities.

5 One of the key cultural indicators of developing countries is a decline in the number of <u>languages spoken by only a small minority of the population</u>.

proofreading and self-editing

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From an international **perpective**, it is important for university students to have **the** understanding of world culture so that they can function in the modern world. While employees **are** working within a local community may **conduct** easily within that community. **Doing** so at a national and international level is more difficult than in the past with the increasing need for modern communication skills such ∧ language proficiency and IT skills. **By contrast**, even though the local education system may provide a sound education based on local or even national knowledge, without a broad understanding of global developments, students as prospective employees are **in** a disadvantage.

1 wrong word / phrase
2 extra word
3 missing word
4 wrong preposition
5 wrong spelling
6 wrong punctuation

self-evaluating and receiving feedback

Checklist

- Overall, is your essay coherent and logical?
- Have you used tentative language to reflect the degree of certainty within each cause and effect relation?
- Is it clear for your audience how the different cause and effect elements fit together?
- Does each paragraph develop logically, and are the transitions between paragraphs logical?
- Does your conclusion relate back to the essay title and thesis statement?
- Have you included sufficient evidence and exemplification to support your main points?
- Have you evaluated the effects, e.g. discussed their likelihood, impact, seriousness?

rewriting

- once, twice, three times, four … or more (!)

What about text types?

- assignment   - essay
- dissertation   - thesis
- report   - article
- rationale   - analysis
- description   - evaluation
- summary

THE ESSAY

The parts of an essay

TITLE: *Trace the development of artificial intelligence (AI) over the last few decades.*

Outline notes

Introduction
AI = more + more important, developing fast recently / companies putting lots of money into research / still in its infancy

Thesis statement
In this essay, I trace the main steps in the development of artificial intelligence since the 1960s.

Body plan with topic sentences
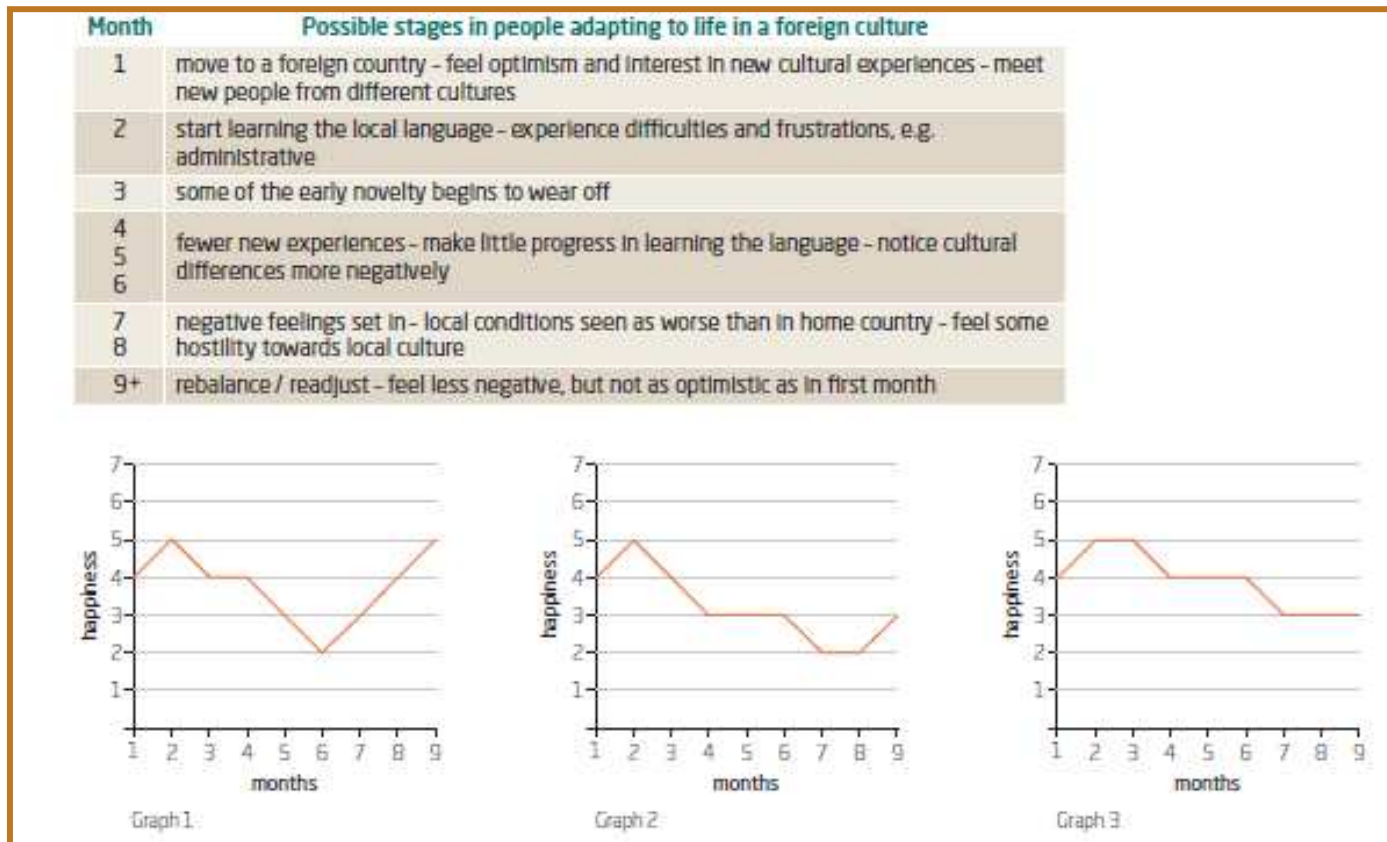Paragraph 1: The invention of the computer was the first major step.
Paragraph 2: Another significant advance was the development of smaller computers + smaller components.
Paragraph 3: The use of robots for industrial + military purposes has seen considerable investment around the world.

Conclusion
As has been shown, artificial intelligence has developed rapidly over the last five decades. As with any brief outline, it has only been possible to give the main developments in artificial intelligence with a brief reference to early machines and automata and humankind's desire to create independent machines. It is clear from the research that the speed of development has been increasing in recent years. Although much has been achieved in the field, artificial intelligence is still in its infancy. While artificial intelligence is an exciting area, more research needs to be carried out into its impact on society in general.

writing about processes

Month	Possible stages in people adapting to life in a foreign culture
1	move to a foreign country - feel optimism and interest in new cultural experiences - meet new people from different cultures
2	start learning the local language - experience difficulties and frustrations, e.g. administrative
3	some of the early novelty begins to wear off
4 5 6	fewer new experiences - make little progress in learning the language - notice cultural differences more negatively
7 8	negative feelings set in - local conditions seen as worse than in home country - feel some hostility towards local culture
9+	rebalance / readjust - feel less negative, but not as optimistic as in first month

Graph 1

Graph 2

Graph 3

What about style?

FORMAL

source: suitsmen.co.uk

Recognizing formal style

1. *Abrahams (2011) says that …*

2. *We all know that …*

3. *I think …*

4. *You've got to …*

5. *It's a great idea to …*

6. *I want to …*

Where do I start?

		Very good	Good	OK	Not good	Don't know
1	Understanding writing tasks					
2	Planning					
3	Creating ideas					
4	Writing introductions					
5	Organizing and linking ideas					
6	Evaluating ideas					
7	Paraphrasing (rewriting using different words)					
8	Summarizing (writing the main points briefly)					
9	Thinking critically					
10	Handling different sources of information					

Part Two Critical Thinking

Teaching academic skills

- Specific reading, writing, listening & speaking skills

- Academic skills

    - understanding complex information

    - developing a thesis & argument

    - using sources, citing & referencing

    - structure and cohesion

- Critical Thinking skills

What is critical thinking?

- Who selected this information?

- Why is it presented in this way?

- Where did it originally come from?

- What other relevant information is not included?

- How can I find further information to put this into context?

What is critical thinking?

Text A:

"Royal Mail loses 15m of your letters a year"

What is critical thinking?

Text B:

"The company said that 99.93% of the 22bn letters it handled were delivered safely, to the right address and on time."

What is critical thinking?

Text C:

"More than 15m badly addressed letters still arrived at the right place and on time each week."

Teaching critical thinking skills

- Preparation

- Evaluation

- Feedback

- Self-reflection

"Pre-thinking"

- Preparing to read, write, listen & speak

- Discussions & brainstorming

- Activating and linking to existing knowledge

- Preparing critical questions

- Independent study
  – preparing for lectures & seminars

Brainstorming

- Brainstorm vocabulary

- Describe

- Answer questions

- Add vocabulary

Predicting

You are going to listen to a lecture on the topic of *language death*.

- What do you think this phrase means?

- Can you think of any languages which might be referred to in the lecture?

Guided discussion tasks

1.

Read the three definitions of *culture.*

Decide which one you prefer, and why.

Guided discussion tasks

2.

Work in groups.

Decide which of the following characteristics you would include in your own definition of *culture*.

Add any further characteristics.

Guided discussion tasks

3.

Write your own definition of *culture*, including your selected characteristics from 2.

Present your definition to the class, and give reasons for your selection.

Analysis

- Identifying main & supporting arguments

- Identifying authors' stance

- Identifying fact & opinion

Evaluation

- Evaluating systems, methods, processes, etc.
- Evaluating arguments
- Synthesizing information from different sources
- Reacting to a text

Feedback & self-reflection

Written work

- – Working with teacher feedback

- – Peer work

- – Proof-reading & self correction

Feedback & self-reflection

Speaking: discussions & presentations

- – Working with teacher feedback

- – Peer observation

- – Working with recordings

Feedback & self-reflection

Study skills

- Strategies

- Time management

Teaching Critical Thinking in EAP

Asking critical questions

Analysis & evaluation

Critical Thinking at every stage of the process

Self reflection & independent study

Oxford EAP

- Critical Thinking is

- In-built and integrated

- Applied to both content and performance

- Noted in some of the task headings.

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